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THE
Temple's Advocate:
England, Church of
OR, A
Serious Exhortation
TO A
Constant Attendance
On the Daily
Publick - Prayers
OF THE
CHURCH.

By a Minister of the Church of
ENGLAND.

L O N D O N:

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Public-Prayer
On the Daily
Constitutional Attendance

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CHURCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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THE
DEDICATION.



HIS small Treatise is most humbly and thankfully dedicated to the Glory of GOD, in promoting of our Establish'd Church, by sincerely endeavouring to gain upon those who dissent, and those who are of our

iv The DEDICATION.

own Excellent Constitution to become truly Religious, and truly Pious Members thereof.

And that these most desirable Ends may be accomplish'd; Do thou, O Blessed *Jesus*, vouchsafe thy Grace and Holy Spirit to be present with, and accompany every Person, who shall at any Time read these Lines, so long as they may continue in the World.



A
Serious Exhortation

TO A
Constant Attendance on the daily

Publick-Prayers

OF THE

CHURCH.



THE Tribes of *Judah* and
Benjamin, who possess'd
the famous City of *Jeru-*
salem, wherein was built
the most magnificent
Temple that ever was;
the Fabrick it self was
framed in Conformity to a divine Pattern
and Order. When finish'd, and the
B Utensils,

Utenfils, and the Furniture thereof; And when the Priests had fixed the Ark in the most holy Place, under the Wings of the Cherubims; And when they were come out of the *Holy of Holies* into the middle Part of the Temple, the Cloud of the divine Presence so fill'd it, that the Priests could not stand to minister, because the Glory of the Lord fill'd the whole House. By this especial Manifestation, God at once Approved and Sanctified this sacred Building. And after this, *Solomon*, who was appointed by God himself to build this Temple, he in a most solemn Manner Consecrates or Dedicates it to the Honour of the Supreme Majesty, and to the most Holy, Divine, and Sacred Offices. Here moreover, the Sons of *Aaron* administred, who had divine Authority, and Commission. Here they constantly performed those Holy Offices, that God himself had appointed, and especially their burning unto the Lord every Morning, and every Evening, Sacrifices and sweet Incense. All which may be learnt in the beginning of the twenty fourth Chapter of *Leviticus*, from the first to the tenth Verse; where we read that God spake to *Moses*, to command and appoint these holy Things.

So likewise in Obedience, and Conformity to this the highest Authority, and the most perfect Wisdom, we have magnificent Buildings, in imitation of that most celebrated Temple. And as that was, so are our Temples, Consecrated, and set apart, for Divine Worship only. As the *Jews* had the Sons of *Aaron*, so we have those to administer, who have the Authority, and are the undoubted Successors of Christ our High-Priest, and his Apostles. And as those, God's peculiar People, had their constant Morning and Evening Sacrifices; so our excellent Church has appointed Morning and Evening Prayers to be performed every Day in our Houses of Prayer, as the Christian Sacrifices.

And all these Things carry along with them the highest Reason, the very strongest Inducement. For since God has raised for us such a most Magnificent World of Wonder, of Beauty, of Ornament, and Bounty, for our Habitation; what can we do less for his, than our utmost in all Respects, to build the most awful, and best of Structures?

And as the Limits of it are large, and vastly Extensive, so we can't do less than dedicate, by way of Gratitude, those small Spaces, which these Fabricks contain, as a thankful Acknowledgment for

the Whole. All our Time is God's bountiful Gift. Can we therefore do less than dedicate some part of every Morning and Evening, to the publick Acknowledgment of this unvaluable Benefit? And what can be more consistent with the most sublime Principles, than to dedicate an Order of Men, of the best Abilities, and the highest Accomplishment, to wait at the Altar, and to exercise the most sacred Functions, as a most thankful Acknowledgment for their own Being, Enjoyments and Hopes; and those of all the rest of their superior Species? Thus this Part, in a Manner, Sanctifies the Whole, and becomes in no small Degree Intercessors, Advocates, and Guardians to all the rest, who are engaged in secular Concerns. Thus we may perceive the Authority, the Example, and the Reasons upon which we act, concerning the Places, the Persons, the Offices, and Times of divine Worship.

The *Jewish* usage was by divine Appointment; and in Conformity to such, a most authentick Original, our excellent Constitution has established such Morning and Evening Sacrifices, to be offered up every Day, as are suitable to the sublime Dispensation, that we are now under. And because 'tis neither
designed

designed nor reasonable, that the Priest should perform this holy Office by himself alone, nor with one Person less of his whole Flock, than can be spared from the necessary, immediate, depending Circumstances, or Affairs of humane Life. And because there is a general Carelessness, Aversion, and Neglect of this most important Duty; What I shall say upon this Subject, shall be by way of Inducement, and Exhortation, to a constant daily Attendance on the most excellent publick Morning and Evening Service, appointed by ours, the very best Establishment in the whole World. To enter therefore upon this important Undertaking.

The Reason of the Sanction of the *Jewish* Sabaoth, was the grateful Recognition of the Accomplishment of the wonderful Works of Creation. And that of the Christians includes this, and adds the Commemoration of the glorious Resurrection of the Son of God, who, by that reassumption of Life, manifested his Divinity, and compleated the Redemption of Mankind. Now in the Celebration of this, the Lord's-Day, when we come to reflect how small a part of it is improved, in direct Offices of Religion, and how many other things seem in a Manner to command the greatest Part

of that sacred Time : When we consider also, how many of these holy Days we have prophaned, how many blessed Opportunities we have slighted and neglected ; and those that we have embraced, how mean have been our Principles, how disregardful our Performances, how little and inferiour the Ends we have proposed to our selves : These and such like Miscarriages argue in all Respects, great Imperfection, and many Defects. And when we have done our best, upon a review, we shall always find Offences or Neglects of these kinds in some Degree or other. Now in this Case, what can be more advisable, or more become a sincerely pious Mind, than to endeavour to make up these Deficiencies, by being at the publick Offices of the Church the Week following, still daily endeavouring to make up what was then wanting, and constantly endeavouring to improve in every Particular. Especially considering, this would be in a Manner, to sanctifie every Day, and to make our Lives, as it were, one perpetual Sabaoth. And at the same Instant instruct, qualifie and dispose our Minds to the very best Manner of Transaction, in our temporal Concerns.

Our Life depends upon the weak Foundation of Uncertainty. Were we
sure

sure we had but a Month, or a Week to live, would we not with Thankfulness and Joy, Welcome and Improve every Opportunity of being in the Temple at the Hour of Prayer. We can by no humane Means whatsoever be assured that these Eyes shall see the Morning Glimmerings, the short Life, or the hasty concluding Period of the next succeeding Day. This single Consideration will not admit of the least Negligence in God's Service, but demands the utmost Care and Observance, to improve all the blessed Times appointed, to set forward our everlasting Salvation, since shortly we shall have quite done with all that is transient and visible. And when we are thus Sedulous and Unwilling to lose one single Opportunity to promote our spiritual Advantage, then we become the especial Favourites of Providence; and have undeniable Title to all the Promises contained in the Book of God, as well in relation to this Life, as that which is to come. For Godliness has the greatest Assurance that can be given, in both those Respects. Such, who thus pursue and thirst after the Kingdom of God, and its Righteousness, the least Part of their Dowry are the Necessaries of this Life, and they with Contentment are

converted into Affluence and Plenty; and when truly Christian Patience is likewise added, there is no pressing Condition that can make such Persons any more than seemingly miserable, for they are notwithstanding, in reality, the most happy amongst Mankind.

Every Time any single Person attends these our holy Offices, he has, in an especial Manner, the Benefit of the Prayers of all the rest of the Congregation then present. And as the Widow's Mite was commended here, and will be rewarded hereafter; so no single Petition, especially in Publick, will ever be overlook'd, by the most Gracious of all Beings, without the best and the most beneficial Return and Answer. And as the Times appointed are generally the same in all our Churches, so we may expect the same suitable reciprocal Advantage from each other's Devotion, as if we were all but one single Congregation, and upon our Knees within the same sacred Walls. And it is the same Thing likewise, in respect of all the Parts of Christ's Church, although never so remote or distant. We all pray by the same divine Spirit, we all plead Acceptance for the sake of the same most prevailing Name, to the same

same Omniscient God. Those therefore, who out of a publick, generous Temper, and extensive Charity, thus frequent the Temple, they have the best Title, and are most qualified, to receive themselves the Benefit of the Prayers of all the Congregations of Christ's Church, all the World over. So immense is the dispensed, and received Benefit of the Communion of Saints, in respect of their daily putting forth their best Wishes and Desires for one another. The Indevout and Prophane, who bring, or add little or nothing to this divine Treasury, can pretend to little or no Advantage from it. Such Considerations as these therefore, should effectually secure our daily Publick Devotions.

Here we are paying that Glory in the most suitable Manner to the all-perfect and most adorable *Trinity*. We own our selves as lighter than Vanity and Nothing. We acknowledge our entire Dependance upon that Self-Originated, and independent Being. We freely Declare and Publish our unconceivable Obligations for our Creation, our Redemption, our Sanctification, and our Hopes of an eternal most glorious State, when Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life. And therefore we here also offer up our Lands, that we may not be Ungrateful, but cheerfully an-
swer

swer what is required of us, for all these
 invaluable Benefits, that the Lord our
 God has, and does constantly vouchsafe,
 And that we may still be approaching
 nearer to the main and ultimate End,
 for which we were born, and for which
 our Blessed Saviour shed his most preci-
 ous Blood. We actually Sanctifie the
 Place where we are. We Sanctifie the
 Time, which is thus improved. We
 actually Sanctifie the religious Offices we
 are engaged in; in the same Manner that
 we Sanctifie the Lord God in our Hearts,
 according to the Apostle's Exhortation.
 Here we deface more and more those
 Dispositions and Propensities, which are
 Vain, Imprudent, Hurtful, and Vicious,
 and still receive new and more lively
 Impressions of what is Good and Holy,
 not only from the Nature and Tendency
 of the divine Ordinances themselves, but
 also from supernatural Communications,
 that in these Exercises always descend
 directly from the bountiful Author of all
 Grace and Goodness. Here we have repeat-
 ed and display'd the most sublime and most
 concerning Truths, the most sublime and
 most concerning Precepts that ever were
 made known to Mankind. Philosophy in the
 greatest Perfection! We are taught the
 very Oracles of the true God. 'Tis a
 Rapture and Transport worthy of the
 highest

highest Intellectuals, but to view the Mystery, the Mercy, the abounding Excellency of the Christian Dispensation! Is it not infinitely better thus frequently to be present in the House of Prayer, than with the negligent and wretched part of Mankind, to withhold what is so justly due to the God of Heaven, and the Saviour of the World? And instead of acknowledging, to undervalue and slight the wonderful Things which have been done, and suffered for them. Or with such, daily to debilitate what is good in them, and to renew and invigorate all instigations to Evil. And thus industriously to desecrate themselves, and every Person, Place, or Matter, that they are concerned withal.

Wicked Men daily affront and provoke the divine Majesty, they exasperate his Justice, they seem to dare Almighty Vengeance, they do their utmost to hasten destructive Judgments upon themselves, and all the World. There is abundant Reason therefore that pious and devout Persons should be as constant in their Pleadings and Intercessions with the offended God of Heaven; to extenuate and appease the divine Wrath; to continue and enlarge our Enjoyments of all Kinds.

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Here we are feasted with what communicates spiritual Nourishment, and refreshes the thirsty Desires of the Soul, Angels Food; The Body and Blood of Christ, by which that Superiour and most comfortable State of Grace is maintained and improved within us. And to remove farther off, and to dissipate the deserved approaching Calamities. Unless it were for such unwearied Intercessors as these, who interpose, there is Reason to think, Vengeance would no longer withhold his destroying Arm, but immediately execute the severe Punishment due to obstinate Transgressors. And consequently the more there are of such daily Petitioners, the more Safe, the more Secure are all the rest of Mankind, as well as themselves. Here we speak to the Honour of God; we do our best to glorifie his holy Name, whilst others are doing the very reverse of it, by their vain, and wicked, and false Oaths, and Blasphemy. Here we are praying for Blessings and Bounties, whilst too many passionate, furious, and revengeful People, are Cursing and wishing utter Destruction and eternal Damnation to one another. Here we are doing our best to procure the greatest Good to all Men, whilst many are designing and endeavouring the greatest Evil to one another. Thus we
may

may detain many Felicities that would be taken away, and shield the World from numberless Evils. Thus we may preponderate general aggravating Iniquities. Thus we may stem the Tide of eagerly approaching Vengeance. And who would not be desirous to assist in these generous Endeavours?

Let us observe, that no one of our Prayers or Thanksgivings will be lost, or insignificant, if they be performed as they ought. Neither does their Efficacy cease as soon as the Performance is over. All these are recorded, and considered, and conceded too, by the Omniscient Bounty. Thus we are daily Treasuring up Favour, Interest, and Assistance, with the Father of Mercies, not only for present Time and Circumstance, but we may many Years after receive the Benefit and Effect of our Petitions and Lauds, express'd so long before. At the Hour of Death, we may expect vast Incomes of Assistance and Protection, arising as the blessed Fruits of these pious Performances, which we have been constantly laying up from Day to Day; and also at the tremendous Judgment. Thus we obtain inexhaustible Riches in Heaven; and what we in this Manner remitted here, will there be paid in large Revenues, with infinite Advantage. It

is therefore, impossible to know, how great, how improving, how durable a Good, a Man procures for himself and others, who thus is constantly in Publick Devout and Thankful.

Let us consider what we find abroad, and at large among Mankind; Do we not perceive we are surrounded and press'd on every Side with Vanity, Falshood, Injustice, Discord, Vice and Wickedness of all sorts? The Righteous and Pious therefore cannot but look upon themselves, as it were, in the midst of *Sodom*, where matter of Grief and Sorrow, upon the Account of these evil Things, is daily brought forth and renewed. Now the Church is, as it were, their little *Zoar*, where they choose twice a Day to retire, and make their Escape, out of a wicked and miserable World; thus having got clear of Noise, Hurry, and Confusion, they joyfully enter the Temple with a Spirit of Seriousness and Devotion resting upon them, a Place of Awfulness, Solemnity and Peace; where Decency, Order, Harmony, and Agreement obtain: Where there is communicated Light, and Joy, and Consolation to the Soul: Where there is the best Endeavours used, to obtain the greatest Benefits, whether Temporal, Spiritual, or Eternal. Here are also the best Dispositions

tions and Graces of a Christian Mind, called forth, exercised, and improved. Thus they sweeten their Pilgrimage, and court Opportunities every Day, to obtain a *Pisgah* View and Prospect; and to anticipate Celestial Raptures and Transports; such as these, therefore, do not come heavily forward, press on, least neglect should offend either God or Man; but with Delight and Cheerfulness, as pursuing the highest Privilege, the greatest Advantage, and the most desired Gratification and Pleasure.

'Tis matter of the highest Inducement, to practise what I am pleading for, when we consider the incomparable Excellency of our publick Liturgy. The greatest Part of it is the pure Word of God, most wisely and piously Collected, and Compos'd in such a Manner, as does most admirably conduce to the best daily Edification that can be aim'd at by the most aspiring Christians. And the rest of our publick Service, as that for the Morning and Evening, as our Collects, our several distinct Offices, and our Litany; They are all adorn'd, and all possible Deficiency made up, and answer'd to, by making the Lord's Prayer a Part of every one of them. Our several Forms of Thanksgiving; they are so much in Harmony with the holy Scriptures; they have

have so much of the Significancy, Solidity, and Majesty of these sacred Writings, in the very Style, that we need not doubt, but the whole was dictated by the same divine Spirit. Our Lauds include all that we can possibly have to praise God for, in respect to past or present Deliverances, Supports, and Enjoyments; and also in regard to all we expect, and hope for hereafter. Our holy and extensive Devotions also comprehend all things we can desire, in relation to this Life, and that which is to come. We include all Persons in the whole World, under what Dignity or Distinction soever. And we also Recognize all States, Conditions, and Circumstances, that Mankind are now in, or may be in at any time, till their everlasting Estates shall be determined by the concluding Performance at that universal Judgment-Seat. Every time we meet, every one may learn, or be reminded of the sublime and undeniable Principles of our most holy Religion, summ'd up in twelve short Articles, a Compendium, if not compos'd by the Apostles themselves, is undoubtedly as ancient as those early Days in which they lived. Herein therefore is contain'd the truly ancient Catholick and Apostolick Faith, so many hundred Years since delivered by Christ and his Apostles, to
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the Saints who were Contemporaries with them. Our elaborate, well digested, and well-composed Discourses, are exceedingly Useful and Proper to convince, to convert, to admonish, to reprove, to exhort, to inform, and amend those, who have had the best of Education, and are endued with the most ingenuous and discerning Abilities. Thus we provide Meat for Men of riper Years, and more polite Accomplishment. Thus we endeavour to manifest our Love to Christ, by taking Care of, and feeding his Sheep. We catechize also the younger Sort, such as Children and Servants : We teach them in such a Manner as suits their weaker Capacities, what they are to believe, what they are to pray for, and what they are to do, in order to their everlasting Salvation. We read the Psalms of *David*, the very Quintessence and Marrow of the whole Bible, as to what is most Sublime and Devout, at least twelve times every Year : And besides the Epistles and Gospels appointed for Sundays and Holy-Days ; we read two Chapters, one out of the *Old*, and another out of the *New-Testament*, every time we meet together : And thus we read the Law and the Prophets once, and the Gospels and Epistles three times every Year. Whereby the most inferiour People, such as have

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not been so much as initiated into the first Rudiments of Literature, may by constant Attendance, by serious Regard, and careful Recollection, obtain a sufficient Knowledge of their Duty, and be acquainted with the whole Will of God, and all things necessary to Salvation. Thus, again, we provide Milk for Babes, and manifest our Love to Christ, by taking Care of, and feeding his Lambs. Upon such Motions as these, therefore, Men should enquire for, and labour after, and watchfully attend, lest they should once lose those happy Seasons ; when they may be in the midst of all these divine Advantages.

It is much worthy our Observation, that so frequently to meet, contains abundance of Advantages every Way. Thus there are Opportunities twice every Day, to bring tender Infants, to be admitted, by holy Baptism, in the Presence of the Congregation, into Christ's mystical Body, and visible Church. Such as have received great Mercies, have these frequent Opportunities Publicly to make their thankful Acknowledgments. Some or other are always Sick, Afflicted, in Pain, under Losses and Disappointments. Some or other also, are constantly disordered in Mind, with Grief, Sorrow, Remorse, or Temptations. Thus often all these are in a general Manner publicly
Pray'd

Pray'd for, not only by the pious Congregation that may meet in their own Parish, but in all other Congregations remote as well as near, where our excellent Liturgy is used, and where they thus frequently assemble: To recollect, that they are thus pray'd for, by the great Charity and Compassion of the Church, is no small Consolation. If they lift up their Minds to God, when they can't be present themselves, and desire and beg for Jesus Christ his sake, that these Prayers may be heard on the behalf of their afflicted Conditions, this will much forward Success: But still much more if they themselves are present, and signify their Case and Desire, and join with the Congregation when they are so piously pleading for them. But in Case of Sicknes, or any other necessary Impediment, it is without doubt, as I have intimated, of great Importance to wish and desire; but of more, to send and signify, you beg the Prayers of the Congregation to God for you. Neither do our daily Devotions contain only these, but now nam'd religious Comforts and Conveniencies, but such Congregations represent and appear not on their own Behalf only, but for all others also, whose Hearts and Souls are with them, but are with Reluctancy detained from being Bodily present, by the necessary Affairs of a busie, laborious,

laborious, entangling and tyrannick World. And as the Children of *Israel*, when they made their Prayers towards *Jerusalem* in the time of their Captivity, wishing they were there to worship, or earnestly panting after the happy Period, when they should return: These, without doubt, were as well accepted as if they had been together in the Temple. And in like manner, all truly pious Persons, who cannot be at Church, if at the Hour of Prayer they sincerely wish their Circumstances would give leave, and beg that God Almighty would accept of these pious Tendencies and Efforts of Mind, instead of so many Morning and Evening Sacrifices offered up in the Congregation, there is no doubt to be made but such would be accepted, as to the main Intents and Purposes, as if they could have spared so much time, and have been actually present with those, who are more at Liberty, and less in Bondage. These Matters signify that 'tis hard to be known how much Good such are Instruments of, in the Hand of God, who daily Visit, and by their Presence adorn the Temple.

We are not backward if Courts and Palaces invite and expect our Attendance; and if, for our Encouragement, we are assured of the Presence and Favour of Majesty, and of such, who are admitted
nearest

nearest to the Throne; the same Argument every Way abundantly magnified, should effectually prevail, to secure our daily Approach to the Lord's House. It is an unspeakable Dignity conferr'd upon us, that we have leave to enter into God's Sanctuary, to set our polluted Feet upon that sacred Ground. Or when entered, to make our most humble Prostrations, considering whom we come to adore, has his principal Residence in the highest Heavens, and yet vouchsafes to manifest himself to the Souls of the Pious, in a more especial Manner, in these Temples made with Hands, and dedicated to his Service. Here likewise our blessed Saviour has promised, by his divine, communicative, and transforming Presence, to be in the Midst of us, in the very Centre of our most devout and ardent Cogitations and Exercises. Here likewise the good Angels guard and defend us from the malicious Suggestions, Endeavours, and Attempts of the evil Ones; and most Kind and Officiously do what is properly their Office and Commission, towards assisting and putting us forward, in the best and most acceptable Manner of Performance. Here we are also Honour'd with the religious Conversation of some of the best of Men; some of the most Holy, and most Devout amongst Mankind.

And that Character alone, is truly more venerable than all the Titles in the whole World without it. Thus, therefore, we are indeed seeking, and obtaining the truest Honour and Glory, leading to a blessed Immortality, and preparing for an eternal happy Life.

In the World, and among Mankind, we find too many, who take up with the inferiour, and more gross Sorts of Gratification; and here they rush forward into degrees exceedingly Licentious, whereby they debase humane Nature, transgress the best of Laws, wound the Mind with Guilt, administer Matter either to fire, drown, or consume the poor abused Carcase, and hasten Death, besides the fatal Tendency there is, in all these Enormities, to everlasting Sorrow. Now, therefore, in opposition to all these infatuating Amusements, let us consider how happy they are, who choose and delight in the Pleasures of God's House, even of his holy Temple. They are the most sublime that Mankind is capable of; they feast the Soul; they gratifie and indulge the most noble and sublime Propensities. Here we are admonished of, and relish the Mercy of God, the Grace of the Gospel, the sweet Influences, the enlivening Agency of the Holy Spirit. Here divine Truth, divine Wis-

Wisdom, divine Goodness, exert and manifest their various most attractive Excellencies, Bounties, and Glories. And who is able to signify what joyful Communications they must dispence; when the Faculties are prepared with open Arms, or enlarged Desires to receive them? Here we unanimously, in a publick Manner, set forth the Praises of the Almighty; neither can we do less than wish that all Nations, as well as all Angels, might join with us, to make up one universal Choir. And still we think there is infinitely more due to Him, who enkindles, maintains, and encourages these our grateful Desires and Attempts. And as we are Candidates for Heaven, so these are our constant Exercises, for our better Qualification, till we shall be call'd to our perfect Performances in the Church Triumphant. These superior Consolations plainly demonstrate, that, with pious *David*, we should always rejoyce when any one says, *Let us go up to the House of the Lord.*

To have a great Estate, or to command vast Sums, is generally esteem'd the Perfection of humane Bliss, although they are not always with Conscience and Honour obtain'd. Although they are subject to Craft, and Violence, and Uncertainty. Although they sometimes melt down, and sometimes fly away.

Although they never go any farther with us than the Grave. Although they too often administer to Pride and Sensuality ; to Envy, Hatred, and Revenge ; and so please and ruine at one and the same time, those who appear'd to be happy. But now, if we devoutly frequent the Temple of God, we are pursuing the true and ever durable Riches, which cannot be obtain'd, but by the Methods which God himself proposes, and therefore will succeed. And if we be resolved in the Use of those Means to secure and improve them, they are absolutely secure and flourishing. They enrich and adorn the Soul, are of the same Nature with it, and therefore, as a part of it self, accompanies and assists it, through the Vale and Gate of Death, to the most illustrious World of Spirits ; and there these very Treasures, are constantly to improve and make their Possessor still more Rich, and more Happy, to everlasting Ages. And these we first acquire and increase, in Proportion to our present inferiour State in these our Temples here below. For there we have daily propos'd the best Arguments, the best Precepts, the best Encouragements, the best Examples, the best Assistance to grow in Mortification, in Self-denial, in Humility, in Patience, in Divine Resignation, in Heavenly-Mindedness, in Faith,

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in Hope, in Charity. And when we are thus Qualified and Accomplish'd, we need not doubt, but we are rich in Grace, which can above all things support under the want of all outward Accommodations, and infinitely to be preferr'd to the immense Revenues of all the Kingdoms in the whole World. So much Profit, such unconceivable Advantage there is, when we make the best Improvement of what is proposed, and urg'd upon us in the House of God, in our daily Assemblies; which seems to contain sufficient, even abundant Inducement, in order to comply with what I am now pleading for.

Whilst we are taken up with the Affairs of the World, whilst we have Converse or Business with Men of differing and contrary Sentiments, of differing and contrary Tempers and Customs, of differing and contrary Views and Interests, and sometimes of no Religion, and of most wretched Morals: These Intricacies frequently perplex the Soul, and put it all into Confusion, so that the most compos'd and excellent Frame of Spirit, is put into Disorder, and for the present our very Principles seem to be undermin'd, and shaken. Now 'tis necessary to be frequently in the House of God, that we may wipe off
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all this Defilement, and take another repeated lively Impression of the best Things upon our Minds. There appears to be no Way like this, to enable the Christian to bear up against the Assaults of an Age full of Vanity, Corruption, and Wickedness. And by such religious and good Custom as this, the degenerate Practice and Opinions of Men will have less Influence upon him, and the holy Offices of the Sanctuary will have still a stronger, and more lasting Effect. Thus he will advance and improve in Goodness, notwithstanding the many Difficulties and Oppositions but now mentioned. There is the same Reason, therefore, to be frequently in the Temple, as there is to desire to gain upon our Enemy, and to be still every Day nearer to a compleat Conquest.

Reasoning and Precept ought to have the Ascendant; but yet 'tis very Observable, that Example has usurp'd the general Applaud and Approbation. This is undeniable, because we see vicious Presidents preferr'd to the most cogent Argumentation. And though this is quite unaccountable by those who act in this Manner; yet 'tis very consistent with the Righteous, from this Custom, to furnish the World with as many Examples of well-doing as they can.

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And in prosecuting such a generous Undertaking, nothing seems to be more conducive, than to be frequent at the daily Prayers of the Church : For if this Example should prevail, there Men would learn every thing else that is Religious, and Praise-worthy ; this therefore appears the most likely and compendious Way of making a Man truly Good. And if this excellent Practice has this blessed Effect, they may be the happy Instruments of saving many other Souls besides their own. And can greater Encouragement than this, be either given or desired ?

We should always take Care to be at Church before Prayers begin ; and if there be any short time before the Minister comes, it should not be abused by light, and wanton, and indecent Discourse, Gestures and Behaviour : But if we be not upon our Knees at our private Devotions, we should sit silent with Seriousness and Gravity, dwelling upon some holy and divine Subject, in our Meditations, and considering where you are ; one would think you could hardly want variety of them. Recollect the rapturous Expression of *Jacob* after his glorious Vision, and the most gracious Promise made to himself and his Seed : *Surely the Lord is in this Place :*
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He also said, *How dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the House of God, this is the Gate of Heaven.* As also, those Words of the Psalmist, signifying abundance of religious Pleasure and Entertainment. *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; my Soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord! My Heart and my Flesh rejoice in the living God!* These Portions of holy Writ will be very proper and very useful in Matters of serious Meditation. We may also consider, how many Thousands, in a long Succession of Years, have been here Worshipping, who, 'tis to be hop'd, are now adoring above; and then you can't do less than lift up your Mind, and wish and pray that you may at last add to that exalted and glorified Number. This holy Place is in an especial Manner appointed by our great Lord and Master, to instruct and improve those who are dedicated to his Name; may I, therefore, become more and more his affectionate, diligent, and improving Disciple. I view where the tender devoted Infants, who were born Children of Wrath, are made Members of Christ, Children of God, and put into a Capacity of inheriting eternal Life. Thanks be to God, that I have been Partaker of these infinite Privileges; and may I never be wanting

ing to express my Gratitude, by performing sincerely my Part of that solemn Covenant. I view the Instrument that helps our slow and heavy Faculties, when the Performance requires we should be all vigour: But this is silent, and has nothing of activity in it, but when the skilful puts in Action all its enlivening, and most entertaining Abilities: Such am I, O my God, without thy holy Inspiration, Direction, and Assistance; be thou therefore ever with me! I view from whence I have been reprov'd for my Sins, and exhorted, instructed, and encouraged in the best of Principles and Practice: O Lord, let not these holy Endeavours be lost upon me, or rise up in Judgment against me, but grant that these and all others, which thy Goodness shall vouchsafe, may ever have the best effect upon me. I view the Place where Christ's Ambassadour has often been, when I have joyn'd with him in our solemn Devotions: O Lord, pardon all my Weakness and Infirmities, and let me daily be better qualified for these holy Performances, and let not any one of these united Petitions be ever forgotten before Thee. I view, as it were, the *Holy of Holies*, where the Bread of Life, and the Cup of Salvation has been often dispens'd, and where I have frequently been,

been a Partaker of those inestimable Benefits : O Lord, as a small Acknowledgment, let me be daily offering up my self, Soul, and Body, a reasonable, holy, and living Sacrifice unto Thee ! The several Monuments I view, their Theam is Mortality, they all plead with me to consider and prepare for my latter End. O Lord, teach me how to make the best Use of all these kind and friendly Admonitions, and let it ever be my main Concern, to be prepared for Death, and to follow all the Saints and Servants of God in their very Footsteps of Faith, of Holiness, and Patience. Thus you perceive, if there be any Vacancy before Service begins, if we will attend, all these good Thoughts and Ejaculations are propos'd and offer'd to fill it up, and still better to dispose your Mind, when you are to join with the Congregation. Such Intimations as these therefore, I thought, in this Case, might be of great Use to all who are piously dispos'd.

A decent and becoming Behaviour is required wherever we are, but much more in the House of God ; there a fix'd and steady Composure of Countenance should appear, bespeaking all the illustrious Characters of a solid and well-considered Devotion : And it is not easy to describe what a great Influence such Instances may

may have in a Congregation ; they are apt to recollect the less serious, and to stir up and quicken the very best of Men. They would clearly signify, that sincere Piety is a Temper that has a great deal of Awfulness, Majesty, Authority, and Command in it. Let every one therefore strive, who shall most excel in every thing of this Nature, and best recommend it to the Imitation of others. Thus Christians would dispence and receive daily, in our publick Assemblies, inexpressible Comfort and Advantage : For Acts of Devotion would commence Habits, and they would be still arriving at higher Improvements, and these would all the while be communicating the very best of Pleasures. Let no Opportunity, therefore, pass by disregarded or unimproved ; and let every one be indeed what is expected from him, when he is in the Tabernacle of the most High.

The general Affairs abroad amongst Mankind are transacted with impatient Desire to administer to Vanity, to promote present secular Interest and Advantage, and not seldom to deceive, injure, damnifie, and ruine others : The truly Religious, therefore, are apt to say, O my Soul, enter thou not into such Mens Secrets. Happy are they who have least to do where there is so much childish, loose

loose and wicked Design : This alienates their Affections, makes them more upon the reserve, and retir'd, and sends them to the Temple with greater Promptitude and Delight : For there the Glory of God is aim'd at, there they know the most important Matters of the Soul and Eternity are debated and set forward. There the most vigorous Wishes are active, the wisest Methods proposed, and the best Endeavours continued and repeated, in order to make all the World Good and Happy. How exceedingly, therefore, are the sincerely devout, superiour to Men of mean and secular Spirits? And how much do these Contradictions recommend a daily Attendance, where there is such sublime Aim and Intention; and where Men are actually Promoting the very utmost that Reason and Religion can require of them?

It is impossible to enumerate the various Instances of God's Mercy, Forbearance, Compassion, Protection, and Bounty to us, every Moment since we have had Existence and Life; and we have no other Security for the Continuance of these mighty Advantages for any future Time, but the unmoved Agency of the same superlative Goodness; can we therefore forbear our daily publick Petitions and Lauds, when they are so exceeding

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made, if you had been truly Zealous, all the former Part of your Lives, then by this time you would have acquired those divine Qualifications and Abilities but now mentioned; and you would have improv'd those numberless Opportunities of doing Good that are all put by, lost, and gone. This is the Case, if we should suppose Men to be doing nothing for so many past Years. But, on contrary, 'tis most certain, that before Men are truly Regenerate, they abuse Time, and commit very many Offences, and still are more and more debased in their Temper. And therefore, when a Man begins to be Good at thirty or forty Years of Age, he has evil Habits to debilitate and destroy, and to make good as much as he can, the Wrong and Injury he has done to others. And therefore, although so far advanced in Years as a Man, he is but a meer Infant in Christianity; and therefore, for some time, as his Strength is little, so his Performances must be but small, 'till by degrees he grows up.

And all that he can do is, to make the best Advantage of the future Part of his Life, which he should have done of the Whole: And these Remains

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are so far from making up former Deficiencies, that we are now abundantly less able to do good, and less qualified for it, than if we had served the Lord from our Youth; so that we are so far from redeeming former Miscarriages, that the future Part of our Life cannot be so good by numberless Degrees, considered in it self, as it might have been, if we had began betimes to be Religious. Therefore, 'tis very plain, that lost Time, and lost Opportunities of Good, are lost for ever. From all which we conclude, that late Penitents and Converts must necessarily fall exceedingly short of those high Degrees of Glory in the other World, which they might have obtain'd, if they had been early in their Returns to God. These Considerations should cause us to set an inestimable Value upon present Time and present Opportunities to serve God, and if we have lost these hitherto, to lose no more; because 'tis very clear and such Loss is very great, not to be recovered. This should be a mighty Encouragement to all pious young Persons, and to every one, without delay, to be *steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord.* Thus, again, are we convinced

'tis

'tis best to lay hold of, and improve in the best Manner we can, the present favourable Opportunities vouchsafed and urged upon us, by a most indulgent Providence, when we are daily called, and expected to be setting forward our own, and the Salvation of others, in God's holy Temple.

Moreover, when we have from our Youth, it may be to old Age, been constant Visitors of the Temple, frequently twice every Day, and have seldom or never omitted those blessed Opportunities, when we could obtain leave from our Affairs, when Sickness or Pain have not hindred, and when we could gain Time to improve in this religious Manner; when all these devout and religious Hours are summ'd up together, they will amount to a very considerable Part of our whole Lives. Now therefore, since we must render an Account of all our Talents, and Time is one of them; here is a great Part of a Man's Life well, and in the best Manner dispos'd of, which will afford most delightful Reflections in a Time of Sicknes, or at the the Hour of Death. Such holy Moments as these, may be answered for with Comfort, and Joy, and Hope; and all succeeded with an ever-

lasting most inexpressibly great Reward. Such Practice as this therefore, demonstrates a wise, as well as a good Man. For what can be more Thoughtful or Prudent, than thus constantly to lay hold of and improve our invaluable Moments as they present themselves, and before they are passed by, and gone for ever? This is to live, as we shall all wish we had lived, when we find our selves upon the Borders of the Grave. Is not this infinitely better, than at such an expiring Period, to have the Conscience bring in such Indictments as these: You have wasted a great part of your Time in Pride, in Vanity, in Wantonness, and Folly; in Places where you knew you should be overcome with Temptations to excess of Wine, and other inebriating Liquors, besides the numberless Hours that have been consumed in the Nurseries of Vice, at the Schools of Immorality and Prophaneness, to be Arraigned and Condemned for all this unfaithful Stewardship, when a boundless Eternity is in View, and makes its very near Approaches, must create a Torment insupportable. Thus Men run the most desperate Hazard of sinking into Despair that short time they have here, and

and into the bottomless Pit that very Moment they part with the Body and this World. It is therefore upon the whole, abundantly worth the best of our constant Care and Endeavours, to avoid all these violent and piercing Accusations, and all their frightful Threats and Severities, to be pronounced and inflicted just at our Departure. And on the other Hand, to secure the unspeakable Comforts of a truly devout Life, when we shall most of all want such Consolation, when we are at the very Conclusion of our Concerns with things present and Sensible.

The Conclusion.

May the Almighty God vouchsafe abundant blessed Fruit and Effect to these weak, but sincere Endeavours, for the Lord Jesus Christ his Sake: To whom, in the Unity of the holy Ghost, be all Love and Obedience paid, by all Men and all Angels, for evermore. *Amen.*

Amen.

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